



# Elementary Education Newsletter

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## Principals' Roundtable Webcasts

**California  
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Superintendent of  
Public  
Instruction**

In partnership with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and staff members at county offices of education, the California Department of Education (CDE) hosted two state-wide professional development events last year, titled *Principals' Roundtable (PRT) Webcasts*.

This series is designed for elementary school (kindergarten through eighth grade) principals and other administrators. The *PRT Webcasts* help to facilitate school improvement by providing a forum for principals and other administrators to share best practices that focus on the effective use of data and scientifically based research. Participants in *PRT* are given the opportunity to gain insight, skills, and strategies to improve student achievement.

School principals who were presenters at the Webcast on January 28, 2004, tied some of their school improvement efforts to the nine Essential Program Components (EPCs) for instructional

success that are endorsed by the State Board of Education (SBE). School Assistance and Intervention Teams focus their efforts to improve student achievement on these components: Instructional Materials, Instructional Time, Administrator Training (Assembly Bill (AB) 75), Professional Development of Teachers (AB 466), Assessment and Monitoring, Coaching and Support, Collaboration, Pacing, and Alignment of Funding with Objectives.

During the Webcast several principals who served as presenters described how they implemented a system to protect reading/language arts and mathematics instructional time. Presenters also illustrated the following successes during the Webcast:

- The positive effect that AB 75 training for principals, AB 466 training for teachers, principal coaching, and teacher collaboration through grade-level planning has had on their school's student achievement
- The methods schools

use to ensure that student progress is monitored, and how educators at each school use assessment information to improve their teaching strategies

- The benefits of hands-on instructional assistance, such as coaching, in reading/language arts and mathematics instruction on student academic success
- The coordination of general and categorical funds at their school to support student achievement

See Chart A for more details on specific school improvement strategies and their relationship to the EPCs.

The *PRT Webcast* for October 1, 2003, and the one for January 28, 2004, is both available for viewing online at the following Web sites:

October 1, 2003:  
<mms://dcpvideo.scoe.net/031003principals1.wmv>

<mms://dcpvideo.scoe.net/031003principals2.wmv>

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## Principals' Roundtable Continued

January 28, 2004:

*mms://dcpvideo.scoe.  
net/040128principals1.wmv*

*mms://dcpvideo.scoe.  
net/040128principals2.wmv*

To view the files, users need Windows Media Player (minimum is version 7) on their computer. A Macintosh version of Windows Media Player is available at:

*http://www.microsoft.com/  
windows/window/media/download/*

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**Chart A**  
**Examples of Essential Program Components in the January 2004 Webcast**

| Essential Program Components (EPCs)  | Example of How Principal Presenters Incorporated EPCs into Their School Improvement Efforts   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Instructional Program</b></p> <p>The school or district provides the most recent SBE-adopted core instructional programs, including accelerated interventions for reading/language arts (2002-2008 adoption) and mathematics (2001-2007 adoption). The programs have been documented to be in daily use in every classroom with materials for every student.</p> | <p>All of the January 2004 principal presenters reported that their school or district provided the most recent SBE-adopted instructional reading/language arts and mathematics programs and that every classroom used these materials daily.</p> |

## Principals' Roundtable Continued

|   | <b>Example of How Principal Presenters Incorporated EPCs into Their School Improvement Efforts</b>   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Instructional Time</b></p> <p>The school or district complies with and monitors implementation of required instructional time by grade level or program, as specified in the state's curricular and instructional frameworks for reading/language arts and mathematics. This time should be given priority and be protected from interruptions.</p>   | <p>Nikki Lane, principal of Butte Valley Elementary School, stressed the Importance of protected reading/language arts and mathematics instructional time. She used classroom observations to ensure implementation of this EPC.</p>   |
| <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>School Principals Instructional Leadership Training</b></p> <p>The district has all principals and vice principals attend the appropriate school-level AB 75 Principal Training Program, Module 1, which is Leadership and Support of the Student Instructional Program (40 hours of institute and 40 hours of practicum) for the school's or district's adopted reading/language arts and mathematics programs.</p>  | <p>Jonathan Vasquez, principal of Rancho Santa Gertrudes Elementary School, continues to receive professional development. In addition to AB 75 training, he has actively used WestEd's principal coaches and reported that this tool was extremely useful to his school reform efforts.</p>   |
| <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Teacher Professional Development Opportunities</b></p> <p>The district provides the school with a substantial number of fully credentialed teachers in all grade levels and has a plan for staffing all classrooms with fully credentialed teachers; a substantial number of these teachers at all grade levels attend AB 466 Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program (40 hours of institute and 80 hours of practicum) for the district's adopted reading/language arts and intervention programs and mathematics program (which are taught in the classroom); and the district has a plan for training all remaining teachers.</p> | <p>Karen Catabijan, principal of Oak View Elementary School, ensured that staff members received a variety of professional development opportunities related to literacy. In addition to AB 466 training, the staff members participated in the California Literacy Project (Reading Results), the Reading Improvement/Reading Excellence Act, Curriculum Calibration, Project GLAD, and the Focused Approach to Teaching English.</p> |

## Principals' Roundtable Continued

|  | <b>Example of How Principal Presenters Incorporated EPCs into Their School Improvement Efforts</b>   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>Student Achievement Monitoring System</b></p> <p>The school or district implements a system for assessing, reporting, and monitoring student progress (by using 6- to 8-week curriculum-embedded assessments, which may include assessments available as a part of the adopted program) and provides information to make instructional decisions on the basis of assessment data. These curriculum-embedded assessments are prepared on the basis of adopted reading/language arts and the adopted mathematics programs. The purpose of these assessments is to provide timely data to teachers and principals to enable them to make decisions that will improve instruction and student achievement. In addition, the assessments provide the basis for the monitoring system.</p> | <p>Thomas Freeman, principal of Josephine Chrysler Elementary School, and staff members actively analyze data and student work and use this information to guide classroom instruction. In addition, teachers are provided with checklists that, along with benchmarks and targeted lessons, focus on content standards.</p> |
| <p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing Instructional Assistance and Support for Teachers</b></p> <p>The school or district provides instructional assistance and support to teachers of reading/language arts and to teachers of mathematics. Districts can meet this EPC with two possible options: (1) hire coaches and content experts who are knowledgeable about the adopted program to work inside the classroom to support teachers and deepen teachers' knowledge about the content and the delivery of instruction; and (2) hire specialists who have experience coaching teachers and who are knowledgeable about the adopted program.</p>  | <p>Staff members at Oak View Elementary School have received ongoing instructional support through using literacy coaches and by working with community agencies to ensure a home-to-school literacy link.</p>   |
| <p><b>7</b></p> <p><b>Monthly Meetings for Teachers by Grade Level or Program or Department</b></p> <p>The school or district facilitates and supports collaboration of teachers by grade level or instructional program to plan and discuss lesson delivery (using curriculum embedded assessment data) for the adopted programs in reading/language arts and mathematics (e.g., regularly scheduled monthly meetings focus on lessons delivery [two one-hour monthly meetings are recommended]).</p>   | <p>Sue Kaiser, principal of Kwis Elementary School, and staff members make good use of their scheduled reflection time or, as they call it, "sacred talk time." They discuss and analyze data as they plan for future instruction and reflect on what they have accomplished to fine-tune their collective skills.</p>       |

## Principals' Roundtable Continued

| Essential Program Components (EPCs) |  | Example of How Principal Presenters Incorporated EPCs into Their School Improvement Efforts  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 8                                   | <p><b>Lesson Pacing Schedule</b></p> <p>The school or district prepares and distributes an annual districtwide or schoolwide pacing schedule for each grade level (kindergarten through grade six) or instructional program or department level (grades six through eight) for both reading/language arts and mathematics (e.g., the annual plan is prepared on the basis of the school calendar so that all teachers know when each lesson is expected to be taught and in what sequence to ensure content coverage).</p> | Jonathan Vasquez, principal of Rancho Santa Gertrudes Elementary School, and staff members have worked with the Los Nietos Elementary School District to provide students with a sequenced approach to reading/language arts and mathematics instruction. Teachers are provided with, and adhere to, a calendar that outlines what lessons will be taught when. The grade-level collaboration and planning ensure content coverage across the grade spans. School and district personnel have aligned the curriculum with the content standards and revised the curriculum guides. |
| 9                                   | <p><b>Fiscal Support</b></p> <p>The school or district general and categorical funds are used appropriately to support the reading/language arts and mathematics program goals in the school plan.</p>   | Thomas Freeman, principal of Josephine Chrysler Elementary School, and the Stanislaus Union Elementary School District work together to make sure that general and categorical funds support reading/language arts and mathematics program goals. Through the use of these funds, district personnel have provided in-class assistance for teachers and students, afterschool programs targeting skill-based instruction, and a Direct Instruction model for lessons to engage students in the lessons taught.   |

### Rancho Santa Gertrudes Elementary School

#### Los Nietos Unified School District

Rancho Santa Gertrudes Elementary School, led by principal Jonathan Vasquez, is an urban school located in Los Nietos Unified School District in Los Angeles County. In 2003 the ethnic make-up of the approximately 530 students at Rancho Santa Gertrudes was principally Hispanic/Latino, which comprised 97 percent of the school's total enrollment. English learners made up 27 percent of the population, and all the students received free or reduced-price lunches.

Jonathan's philosophy, "All students can be successful given the appropriate support and resources and given the appropriately trained staff to meet their needs," guided his successful at-

tempts at school reform at Rancho Santa Gertrudes throughout his tenure. From the very beginning of his term as principal, Jonathan took large strides toward the goal of raising student achievement. The first affirmative action taken by Jonathan was engaging the staff in district training on "accelerated literacy." Teachers at Rancho Santa Gertrudes quickly discovered the positive effects of professional development. Moreover, the school community no longer views outside issues, such as socioeconomic status, language background, and other external factors, as impediments to student achievement.



## Ansgar Larsen Elementary School

### Hueneme Elementary School District

Ansgar Larsen Elementary School, whose principal from 1998 – 2003 was Graciela Gandara, is a large kindergarten-through-grade-five school located in the Hueneme Elementary School District (Oxnard, California). According to the 2002 California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) data, the ethnic make-up of the approximately 800 students at Larsen is predominantly Hispanic, or Latino, at 95.5 percent. White (not of Hispanic origin) students comprise 2.2 percent; Filipino, 1.3 percent; Pacific Islander, 0.5 percent; African American, 0.3 percent; and Asian, 0.3 percent. English learners comprise 76 percent of the school population, and 89 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches.

When Graciela Gandara was assigned as Larsen's principal in fall of 1998, the school had the second lowest Academic Performance Index (API) ranking in the district. To the newly appointed principal, the reason for this poor performance was a mystery because by all accounts, the staff members were very accomplished and committed to their school.

As Graciela got to know her staff and new school, she learned that the biggest problem faced by Larsen School was the lack of a plan and a person responsible for enforcing the plan. There was a void in the school's leadership, especially instructional leadership, which is essential to the success of a school site. Graciela notes, "The role of the principal is the most essential in school improvement. Passion, vision, and the sense of urgency in a school can only be fostered and maintained by the instructional leader."

She points to a number of factors that were important to turning around student performance at her school. These factors included building a vision of excellence for the school, developing a plan and evaluating progress made toward the plan, putting into place procedures for teachers to ensure they have all the supplies and support they need, training teachers to see change as an ongoing event, and focusing on teaching all children to read as their shared mission.

The specific strategies used to improve student performance in reading at Larsen included a wide range of techniques. Chief among these

strategies were implementing Results Assessments schoolwide, providing professional development in the Dimensions of Reading program, providing a substantial reading/language arts instructional block, analyzing student data by way of a five-step plan devised by the Literacy Team, encouraging parent involvement by developing family literacy, and creating intervention programs for kindergarten through grade one that the staff members called the "reading crew" and "ICU reading" intensive groups. The school also has three instructional programs for English learners: Sheltered Immersion, English Language Learners (which is taught in the primary language), and English Development, an English-only program.

Larsen's focus on the key factors mentioned above and the implementation of specific strategies to support those factors yielded impressive results. Larsen's schoolwide API increased within three years from 500 to 643. Notably, the API for its English learner subgroup is now 629 compared to 491 three years ago. Larsen School also progressed from having the second-lowest API ranking in the district to being one of two schools to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) target for 2003 in the Hueneme School District. It met this AYP target with a 95 percent participation rate.

In her role as an educational leader, Graciela drew on the following research and resources:

- Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1990.
- *Results*, California Reading and Literature Project, <https://tepd.ucop.edu/results>, 2001.
- National Association of Elementary School Principals, *Leading Learning Communities Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*. Public Broadcasting System, 2003.

In addition to using research and studying effective management techniques, Graciela has a wealth of experience in education to use as a resource. She has served 16 years as a teacher in a bilingual setting and has ten years of experience as an administrator in the Hueneme School District. Her excellence as an educator has been acknowledged through her designation as Teacher of the Year for Oxnard School District in

## Butte Valley Elementary School

### Butte Valley Unified School District

Butte Valley Elementary School, a 2003 Title I Achieving School, is directed by Nikki Lane. This small, rural school is located in northern California. In 2003 the ethnic make-up of the approximately 165 students at Butte Valley Elementary School was principally Hispanic (47 percent of the population). In addition, American Indian and Alaska Native students made up one percent of the population, and white students (not of Hispanic origin) comprised the remaining students. English learners make up 29 percent of the population, and 79 percent of the students received free or reduced-price lunches.

For Nikki Lane the focus of her work as a principal is the motivation, inspiration, and empowerment of students and staff members to meet the school vision of student success. In fact, Nikki believes that the primary role of a principal is to be "The educational leader. That covers everything from providing staff support and assistance, being a resource for parents, and being a sounding board for parents and staff. The role of the principal is everything. It is filling in for a teacher when she has to go home sick and mentoring teachers when they need help. A principal provides that support parents and staff need to be successful."

Scaffolding learning, or modifying instructional strategies, is Butte Valley Elementary School's primary focus. The school concentrates on state standards and the individual learner. Students are grouped for instruction by their particular mastery level rather than by grade level. As a result, the Butte Valley Elementary School staff members believe that they are better able to provide students with much needed instructional support. Staff members assess and then place students where the students need to start, then build their skills. Butte Valley Elementary School has found that placing students in this way deals with current learning gaps and prevents future learning gaps from occurring.

In addition to adopting new philosophies, Nikki used a number of specific techniques to motivate her staff members to create their school vision of student success. Among these techniques is the use of literature to illustrate the importance of the teachers' work and the effect teachers can have on children and their lives. Nikki used the state's emphases on reading/language arts and mathematics instruction to create teacher and parent support for these important curricular foci. When parents and teachers saw success in these areas, they became motivated to execute the overriding theme at Butte Valley Elementary School: "If it does not teach math and reading, we do not focus on it."

The evidence of the effective, hard work at Butte Valley Elementary School by each and every staff member to achieve the school's vision of student success is supported by API data. For example, in 1999 Butte Valley Elementary School's API was 467, and its similar school's rank was two. In 2003 Butte Valley Elementary School had attained an impressive API of 711-- an increase of 244 API points in only three years.

The principal relied on additional resources and research to help support and validate the good work at Butte Valley Elementary School, including Ruby Payne's book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (2003; revised).

An energetic and inspiring principal for Butte Valley Elementary School, Nikki Lane has served as an educational leader in Siskiyou Unified School District for five years. Nikki gained her direct teaching experience in the Merryhill system over ten years. During her last three years as administrator for Butte Valley Elementary School, Nikki has been active in the Butte Valley Community Team, which uses Proposition 10 funds to support quality, subsidized childcare.

## Bullying

Bullying has moved to the forefront of educational topics because it is a problem that affects all children, all schools, all school districts, and all communities in some way, shape, or form. Recent statistics show that bullying by classmates is a serious and pervasive problem (see List of Statistics on Bullying), but one that has been around so long that its importance is often minimized. Although most students are able to tolerate a moderate level of teasing, a significant group of students are deeply troubled by peer rejection, become seriously depressed, and develop a smoldering anger and resentment that may build for years. Societal factors, such as entertainment media violence, news coverage that sensationalizes extreme violence, and the ready availability of weapons, combine to encourage or facilitate violent responses to bullying (Best 2002; Bosworth 1999; Poland 1998).

In more typical cases a student's response to bullying may not involve violence but is still cause for concern. Research indicates that victims of bullying often experience problems with emotional adjustment, including depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem, accompanied by low academic achievement. According to Ballard, Argus, and Remley (1999), the prognosis for bullies is also problematic because bullying appears to be a gateway behavior that leads

to more serious aggression and delinquency. Adult tolerance for bullying sends a mixed message to all children that implies acceptance of coercion and harassment as a means of controlling others (Bullock 2002; Elliott and others 2001; Kearns 1998; Pietrzak, Petersen, and Speaker 1998).

### **Are Certain Children More Likely to Be Bullied?**

Bullies sense defenseless tendencies in other children. Bullies also might pick on children who are different, such as children who have mental or physical disabilities or children who do not fit their prescribed vision of "cool." Victims of bullying often are loners. Children who appear to be friendless can be magnets for bullies. Many times bullies choose victims by how they carry themselves. These victims are children who stand out from the crowd for a variety of reasons: they may dress differently, wear their hair in a dissimilar fashion, have a diverse belief system, or simply not be a part of the "right" clique. Sometimes there is no overt reason why a bully selects a certain child to pick on. However, bullying leaves its victims believing that there is something wrong with them. The result of such maltreatment is that children's self-esteem becomes shattered (Ballard, Argus, and Remley 1999; Bullock 2002; Elliott and others 2001; Kearns 1998; Pietrzak, Petersen, and Speaker 1998).

### **How Do Bullies Become Bullies?**

Bullies are often angry. They may repeat adverse behavior because someone bullied them in the past. Bullies typically have low self-esteem and believe that controlling someone else will make them feel better about themselves. In addition, bullies may have been exposed to an excessive amount of violence in their personal life or in the media. Children may also become bullies as a result of peer pressure. Their friends may exert undue pressure on them to intentionally belittle or demean another child. Thus, bullies may act aggressively because of their desire to fit in. Finally, bullies can become bullies because their caretakers may not have provided adequate and appropriate supervision. These children may have parents who did not teach them that it is wrong to hurt others, or they may have parents who have been overindulgent. This latter group of children believe that they can do or say anything they want without recourse (Banks 1997; Bullock 2002).

### **What Can Parents Do to Help Their Children?**

Parents who are actively involved in their children's lives are more sensitive to problems and more cognizant of when these problems start to occur. Parents who promote honesty, ask questions, listen with an



## Bullying Continued

open mind, and focus on understanding their children are more responsive to incidences of bullying. Parents need to allow children to express how they feel and need to treat children's feelings with respect. These parents set a good example by modeling a healthy temperament. They settle conflicts by talking things out peacefully. Parents also need to praise their children when they see them using positive skills to settle differences. Finally, parents need to teach their children to take responsibility for their own actions. Learning to take responsibility for their actions creates healthier children with healthier self-esteems and eliminates the existence of bullying behaviors (Peter 2000).

When parents suspect that their children have become the victims of a bully, their first step is to get their children to admit there is a problem. Children who are victims of bullying may be embarrassed or scared and deny being mistreated. Parents should encourage their children to talk about their feelings. Children need to know that they can trust their parents and look to them for help. Before parents call the school or the bully's parents, they should give the children involved in the conflict the option of settling the situation themselves. Children benefit from settling their own issues without adult interference. When children are able to solve their own problems, their self-

esteem is increased and the probability of future bullying is reduced. Parents should teach their children proactive ways of resolving conflict. For example, if a child is being verbally abused because of poor social skills—his or her shoes are always untied; he or she walks with his or her head down; he or she avoids eye contact; or he or she bites his or her nails—parents should be alert that some type of problem exists. Parents may want to role-play with their children to see how their children act around other children. Role-playing also gives parents the opportunity to help their children work out acceptable responses to bullying (Mueller and Parisi 2002; Peter 2000).

### What Can Schools Do to Help Stop Bullies and Violence?

Fundamentally, school staff can stop bullies and alleviate violence by encouraging child-to-child, teacher-to-parent, teacher-to-teacher, and parent-to-child conversations. School administrators should hold town meetings involving the parents, students, and entire school faculty to discuss conflict resolution. Teachers should allow the students to relate their ideas on how they would like situations handled. Role-playing "victims and bullies" in the classroom helps younger students understand the cause and effect of how such behaviors make others feel. Another idea that staff can use for younger children

who are getting picked on is to assign older students as mentors that the younger children can talk to. These mentors would also step in to mediate conflicts or disputes. Groups have been created for victims and their parents so that they can meet with other families to discuss solutions. Students are comforted by the realization that they are not alone, and friendships can be made in these groups (Brewster and Railsback 2001; Juvonen 2001; Mueller and Parisi 2002).

School staff can also curb bullying by supervising bathrooms, physical education changing areas, and locker areas during class changes. Many educators admit that these areas are the most common places for bullying to occur. School staff can also pass out questionnaires and survey students and parents to find out what is happening and what students and parents would like to see done.

### For Teachers and Parents of Bullies—Some Useful Questions to Ask

The following questions are designed to help the children doing the bullying realize that their actions are not acceptable. When posing these questions to bullies, teachers and parents help children acknowledge their actions and the consequences of their actions, develop a sense of shame, alter their actions to make better decisions, and learn how to trust and form

## Bullying Continued

positive relationships with helping adults.

- What did you do?
- Why was that a bad thing to do?
- Who did you hurt?
- What were you trying to accomplish?
- The next time you have that goal, how will you meet it without hurting anybody?
- How will you help the person you hurt?

All members of the school community must work together to eradicate the pervasive problem of bullying (Juvonen 2001). Removing bullying from schools mitigates the problems that are associated with the poor emotional adjustment (e.g., depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem) and low academic achievement experienced by so many victims (Brewster and Railsback 2001; Juvonen 2001).

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### Selected Resources

The following resources can provide important additional information for school administrators, teachers, parents, and children.

### Web Sites

- Bullying.org Canada Inc. 2003. "Where You Are Not Alone." <http://www.bullying.org> (accessed August 12, 2004).
- California Department of Education. 2003. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/se/bullyres.asp> (accessed August 16, 2004).
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## Bullying Continued

### Recommended Research

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### List of Statistics on Bullying

- One out of four students is bullied.
- One out of five students admits to being a bully or doing some "bullying."
- Eight percent of students miss one day of class a month for fear of bullies.
- Forty-three percent of students fear harassment in the bathroom at school.
- One hundred thousand students carry a gun to school.
- Two hundred eighty-two thousand students are physically attacked in secondary schools each month.
- More youth violence occurs on school grounds than on the way to school.
- Eighty percent of the time an argument with a bully will end up in a physical fight.
- One-third of students surveyed said that they had heard another student threaten to kill someone.
- One out of five teenagers knows someone who brings a gun to school.
- Playground statistics: Every seven minutes a child is bullied with the following intervention rates: adult intervention – 4 percent; peer intervention – 11 percent; no intervention – 85 percent.
- One-third of the high school students surveyed reported that someone sold or offered them illegal drugs on school property.
- Forty-six percent of males and 26 percent of females reported that they had been in physical fights.
- Teachers are also assaulted, robbed, and bullied. There were 84 crimes for every 1,000 teachers last year.

Source: This information was gathered from Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2000, a joint effort by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Center for Education Statistics that is prepared every four years. This report examines crime occurring in school and on the way to and from school. Data for crimes away from school are also presented to place information on the nature of crime in schools. This document can be accessed at: <http://www.ojp.usdof.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/iscs00.pdf>.

## Rancho Continued

They conscientiously strive to work around the effects of those issues to ensure that the children of Rancho Santa Gertrudes are afforded a quality education.

The school community members at Rancho Santa Gertrudes, under Jonathan's quiet yet resolute leadership, have found that their efforts to improve student performance have been substantiated by steady gains in the school's Academic Performance Index (API) that have actually accelerated over the last few years. For example, the school's API grew from a 1999 API base of 496 to a 2003 API base of 730. The dedicated teaching staff, the highly trained paraprofessionals, an extremely capable administrative support staff, and the secretarial and custodial staff are all supportive players in these gains.

Jonathan attributes the school's turnaround in student performance in a large part to a focus on data-driven instruction, the alignment of curriculum to the state standards, and grade-level teams working together in cohesive teams to assess and reflect on the use of data. These strategies have been used by teachers at Rancho Santa Gertrudes for three years, but their use has increased recently as a result of the of the California standards, standards-aligned textbooks, and ongoing assessment centered around units of instruction that are aligned to the state standards.

Teachers and administrators use data to target instruction and student data are used for school planning purposes. All decisions that are made regarding funding, schoolwide activities, staff development materials, and so on are made on the basis of student data.

Hired in 1991 as the district psychologist, Jonathan served as the administrator for special education for the district. He holds two master's degrees: one in counseling and another in school administration.

Jonathan Vasquez summed up his experience over the last three years as principal of Rancho Santa Gertrudes by stating, "My school and my staff have accepted the challenge to change our instructional focus and philosophy to meet the needs of our students, and we have found success."

## Ansgar Continued

1989–90 and nomination for an Amgen Teaching Award. She has also presented for the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) on the topic "Principal as the Benevolent Leader" and has been named in "Notable Latin American Women."

Graciela believes that there is no single master plan that can be applied to every school. However, she says, "If we study the data, develop a plan and do everything possible to make sure that as a team staff work to that plan, we can successfully educate all children no matter where they come from, their parents' level of education, or the language they speak. Those are incidentals. It is their wonder, their energy, and their willingness to learn that we must focus on."

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